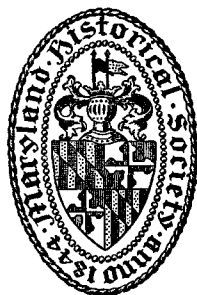


# MARYLAND HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED BY  
THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



VOLUME LIX

BALTIMORE  
1964

## EDITORIAL POLICIES OF THE MARYLAND GAZETTE

1765-1783

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PROFESSOR Edmund S. Morgan recently suggested that revolutionary period scholars "must dissect the local institutions which produced the American Revolution, the institutions from which are distilled the ideas that enabled men of that age to stand as the architects of modern liberty."<sup>1</sup> On the Chesapeake tidewater one of the most significant institutions influencing the change of colonial ideals from dependence to independence, and at the same time leaving such concepts as freedom of religion, speech, and press engrained in the revolutionary mind, was the Annapolis journal operated by Jonas Green, his wife and his sons. Throughout the period from the passage of the Stamp Act to the signing of the Treaty of Paris, the *Maryland Gazette's* weekly issues both influenced and reflected local thought.

Much has been written about colonial printing and printers, but the monographs about the Green family in particular or editorial policy in general neglect them as editors. Both Lawrence C. Wroth, in *A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland*, and Joseph T. Wheeler, in *The Maryland Press, 1777-1790*, were primarily concerned with biographical and typographical matters. Arthur M. Schlesinger, in *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain 1764-1776*, chiefly concentrated on newspapers above the Mason-Dixon Line; and one of the important missing papers was the *Maryland Gazette*, begun by a former apprentice of Franklin in 1745. Green, newly wed to Anne Catharine Hoff, came to the capital in 1738. The young man rapidly advanced in provincial society. He became civic leader, church officer, and poet, punchmaker, and punster to the popular Tuesday Club of local gentlemen. He also

<sup>1</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, "The American Revolution: Some Revisions in Need of Revising," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., XIV (January 1951), pp. 13-15.

established one of the important printing firms of early America. Anne Catharine would succeed Jonas and their sons would follow as heads of the family press.<sup>2</sup>

Editorials as such were unusual in eighteenth century journalism; only rarely did the Greens express themselves openly. Instead, they allowed Marylanders and other colonials free usage of their pages for contributions of poetry, prose, religious discussions, and, with greater frequency after the French and Indian War, political diatribes. In heated political controversies, the Green press attempted a program of impartiality, giving each side space fully to express their opinions on controversial issues, for such a policy was lucrative. Despite the contentiousness of partisans of Maryland's "country" and "court" parties, the Greens managed to receive the Assembly's favor as "Public Printer"—a government largess which made the *Gazette* financially better off than its rival Maryland newspapers.

Outstanding among such controversies was the series between the "First Citizen" (Charles Carroll of Carrollton) and "Antilon" (Daniel Dulany, the Younger). For the first six months of 1773, the *Gazette's* readers contemplated the charges and counter-charges of the two antagonists. The argument over Governor Robert Eden's fee proclamation of 1770 was part of the prelude to the May elections. Enthusiasm was such that people crowded the small printing house each Thursday to buy the paper fresh off the press in order to read the latest discourse.<sup>3</sup> Thus was controversy profitable.

The protagonists used pseudonyms, but these rarely hid from the public the true identity of the participants. Dulany, backing the governor, had the entire British legal tradition on his side, and used his arguments effectively. Carroll, obviously more influenced by the rationalism of his education in France than by his instruction at London's Inns of Court, took a natural rights

<sup>2</sup> All biographical information on the Green family, except where otherwise noted, comes from Lawrence C. Wroth, *A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland, 1686-1776* (Baltimore, 1922), pp. 76-81, or Joseph T. Wheeler, *The Maryland Press, 1777-1790* (Baltimore, 1938), pp. 66-70. The finest study of the environment in which the Green press operated is Charles A. Barker, *The Background of the Revolution in Maryland* (New Haven, 1940).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 344-48; Aubrey C. Land, *The Dulanys of Maryland* (Baltimore, 1955), pp. 289-90, 301-07.

position.<sup>4</sup> The acrid conflict worsened when elections brought defeat of "court" candidates. A poem, signed "Broomstick and Quoad," revived latent anti-Catholicism by denouncing Carroll's writings as papistic.<sup>5</sup> But several newly elected delegates wrote the "First Citizen" a public letter commending his "nervous and masterly defense of the constitution, against the late illegal, arbitrary and oppressive proclamation."<sup>6</sup>

Another argument of vital importance concerned the established church. Above all, their conduct on this particular issue demonstrated how the Greens championed freedom of the press. Not only were they active churchmen, but also they received a salary for their duties as parish registrar. Jonas and his sons William and Frederick successively held the post from 1746 until the latter resigned in 1777. The stipend for these services allowed them to profit from the church's establishment.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, they allowed Samuel Chase and William Paca to urge disestablishment in opposition to Jonathan Boucher, the controversial Anglican priest. This particular colloquy was distinguished because the participants signed their articles which appeared in nearly every issue of the *Gazette* in 1772 and 1773. They debated over the taxes levied to support the church and the proposed installation of an Anglican bishop in America. If sheer amount of space devoted to an issue is an indication of the intensity of a problem, the provincial church appears to have been more of an issue to Marylanders than the illegality of parliamentary taxation.<sup>8</sup>

Another issue of concern arose over whether coercion should be used to enforce the Articles of Association. The Sons of Liberty were forcing Marylanders to support the boycott against

<sup>4</sup> Dulany's articles appeared in *The Maryland Gazette*, Jan. 7, Feb. 18, Apr. 8, June 3, 1773, and Carroll's on Feb. 4, Feb. 25, March 11, May 6, July 1, 1773; see also Barker, *Background*, pp. 351-54.

<sup>5</sup> *Md. Gazette*, June 10, 1773.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, May 27, 1773.

<sup>7</sup> "Vestry Proceedings, St. Ann's Parish, Annapolis, Md.," *Md. Hist. Mag.*, VII (June, 1912), 181, VIII (Dec., 1913), 360, IX (Mar., 1914), 50, X (Mar., 1915), 41, X (June, 1915), 136, 142.

<sup>8</sup> For examples see *Md. Gazette*, Dec. 31, 1772, Jan. 14, Feb. 4, Apr. 1, Apr. 29, May 6, 1773; for more on Boucher see, Philip Evanson, "Jonathan Boucher: The Mind of an American Loyalist," *Md. Hist. Mag.*, LVII (June, 1963), 123-36, and Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, I, *The Colonial Mind* (New York, 1954), pp. 218-23.

British goods prescribed by the Articles in order to force repeal of the Intolerable Acts. Again both sides received space.<sup>9</sup> By early 1775, the arguments grew so fierce that the Greens printed handbills for participants since newspaper lineage was limited.<sup>10</sup>

As elsewhere in British America, independence became the burning issue in Maryland during the first half of 1776. Columns were filled with arguments for and against Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. The Maryland Convention had voted against severing the ties with Britain, but patriots went from county to county holding meetings to oppose these restrictions upon the province's delegates to the Continental Congress. The *Gazette* printed the resolutions of such meetings, and these were then used to force the Convention to free its delegates to sign the Declaration.<sup>11</sup>

In 1780-81 controversy again erupted over the confiscation of loyalist property. Things became so heated that Charles Carroll of Carrollton and Samuel Chase took off their cloaks of anonymity and each engaged in vindictive arguments over the character and motivations of the other.<sup>12</sup>

There were limits to the latitude that the Green family could allow their correspondents for they were libel for inflammatory statements appearing in their paper. This necessitated some sort of censorship. The consequences of not adopting such a policy were shown in the case of William Goddard, editor of the *Maryland Journal* in Baltimore. A combination of irresponsible editorial decisions and demagogic local political leadership resulted in Goddard being twice driven from the city. Only the interposition of the Maryland Council of Safety, whose leaders had seen the *Gazette* champion freedom of the press for over three decades, allowed Goddard to return safely to Baltimore.<sup>13</sup>

Thus as early as 1766, the Greens practiced editorial restraint in the acceptance of material. Jonas Green rejected as "too personal" an article by Chase attacking Mayor Walter

<sup>9</sup> *Md. Gazette*, May 26, June 2, June 9, 1774.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 19, Feb. 2, Feb. 23, 1775.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, every issue Mar. 7-July 18, 1776.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, (Carroll) Aug. 23, Aug. 30; (Chase's reply) Sept. 27, Oct. 11, 1781; beginnings of the confiscation argument can be seen in letters by Carroll as "A Senator," Feb. 11, Feb. 18, Feb. 25, 1780, and replies by "A Plecian" of Prince Georges County, Feb. 18, and Baltimore's "Publicola", Feb. 25, 1780.

<sup>13</sup> Ward L. Miner, *William Goddard, Newspaperman* (Durham, N. C., 1962), pp. 150-62, 167-73.

Dulany. In so doing, Green invited criticism of himself since he had previously allowed Dulany to reply to Chase's original arguments. It is possible that his personal friendship with the Dulany family was the major reason behind his decision to refuse this tirade against the town's mayor in this so-called "Paper War." On the other hand, Chase was notorious for unbridled invective whether oral or written.<sup>14</sup>

The year following her husband's death in 1767, Anne Catharine Green, succeeding provincial printer and *Gazette* editor, refused to print arguments of the Reverend Bennet Allen, rector of St. Anne's of Annapolis, who wished to rid his vestry of elements opposed to him. Allen refused to sign his essays or post bond to indemnify the printress in case of libel. Supporting her in this particular argument was her son-in-law, John Clapham, a minor proprietary official, who wrote three letters to the *Gazette* explaining Mrs. Green's position.<sup>15</sup>

During the disestablishment arguments of 1773 several unsigned articles appeared attacking the personal character of William Paca. Extremely upset, Paca told Anne Catharine Green, in a letter she published, "if you are hereafter an instrument in propagating, thro' the channel of your press any *personal reflections* on me, and *conceal* the author, by which, as hitherto, I am deprived of an opportunity of treating the *infamous scoundrel* in the manner he may deserve, I shall hold you responsible."<sup>16</sup> Mr. Paca had no more trouble in this regard.

The impropriety of remarks written during the confiscatory discussion caused Frederick and Samuel Green to remind contributors of their responsibilities. On March 3, 1780, the brothers wrote: "*Several pieces are received and will be published in the order they came to hand. Scaevola to the Senator contains several exceptional passages, and will be returned to the author. Vindex is likewise too personal, and cannot be pub-*

<sup>14</sup> The affair is well discussed in Neil Strawser, "Samuel Chase and the Annapolis Paper War," *Md. Hist. Mag.*, LVII (Sept. 1962), pp. 188-91, and Francis W. Beirne, "Sam Chase, 'Disturber,'" *ibid.*, LVII (June 1962), p. 86; *Md. Gazette*, Mar. 13, Mar. 20, Mar. 27, May 1, June 19, July 17, 1766.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 22, Nov. 17, Dec. 8, 1768; Josephine Fisher, "Bennet Allen, Fighting Parson," *Md. Hist. Mag.*, XXXVIII (Dec. 1943), p. 315, XXXIX (Mar. 1944), p. 53.

<sup>16</sup> *Md. Gazette*, Sept. 30, 1773.

lished."<sup>17</sup> There was still some confusion among their correspondents. One wrote a friend in Annapolis, "if Green says it is to have been usual to communicate the *name* of the author—tell him—but tell him to be secret."<sup>18</sup> To clarify the entire situation the Greens declared: "*No pieces will be inserted in this Gazette unless the authors send their real names to the printers.*"<sup>19</sup> This settled the problem of censorship and libel suits once and for all.

Brief expressions of the editor's attitude toward current political topics often appeared in short italicized items, under the Annapolis dateline, preceded by a triangular arrangement of three asterisks, i. e. \* \* \*. The family political preference at first slyly leaned to the patriot cause, judging from these cryptic statements. But the Stamp Act bore heavily on the colonial press and the Greens openly defended their interests. The wily Jonas Green attacked the Stamp Act by heading his paper of October 10, 1765, *The Maryland Gazette, Expiring: In uncertain Hopes of a Resurrection to Life again*. A week later he began publishing the first of three supplements to this issue, thereby avoiding printing a new issue which would be subject to the hated tax. On December 10, there appeared *An Apparition of the late Maryland Gazette*. By January 30, 1766, he changed the numbering to a new issue and entitled it *The Maryland Gazette, Reviving*. The paper resumed its old title on March 6. During the time he was dodging the tax, he printed the essay by Daniel Dulany entitled *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes in the British Colonies*<sup>20</sup> and expressed favoritism of some of the activities of the Sons of Liberty.<sup>21</sup>

The Annapolis printers supported the cause of the "country" party the more by printing letters from various Committees of Correspondence, selected excerpts from London papers showing Parliament antagonistic to the colonials, political essays like

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 3, 1780.

<sup>18</sup> William Vans Murray to Henry Mayndier, Oct. 1, 1781, in Murray MSS, Md. Hist. Soc., Baltimore.

<sup>19</sup> *Md. Gazette*, Nov. 22, 1781.

<sup>20</sup> Wroth, *Printing*, pp. 83-84 [Daniel Dulany], *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes in the British Colonies*, (Annapolis, 1765?); Land, *Dulanys*, pp. 259-68.

<sup>21</sup> *Md. Gazette*, Mar. 6, 1766.

John Dickinson's "Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer,"<sup>22</sup> letters to the printer, and brief reports of popular party activities in Maryland.<sup>23</sup> Repeal of the Townshend Acts curtailed the crusading zeal in most of the colonies until 1773,<sup>24</sup> when Marylanders chose a new Lower House of the Assembly. The arguments of the "First Citizen" and "Antilon" were manifestations of this campaign.

By mid-1774, the columns of the *Gazette* were so crowded with news from Williamsburg relative to the Boston crisis, from London about large amounts of British money, arms, and troops being sent to the Massachusetts port, and from Annapolis concerning citizens' meetings on united colonial action due to the Intolerable Acts, that Anne Catharine Green apologized: "*The conclusion of the essay on the advantages of a classical education, is postponed for the want of room.—Advertisements omitted will be inserted next week.*"<sup>25</sup>

Mrs. Green tried to show that all elements in American society were cooperating in the patriot cause when she commented:<sup>26</sup>

Many reflections being thrown out by some *prejudiced persons*, insinuating that the Quakers are totally inactive in the present struggles for *American liberty*, it is with real pleasure that we can assure the public, that that truly respectable society have lately resolved in one of their meetings lately held in Philadelphia, neither to *drink tea*, nor suffer any to be used in *their families*.

With the tide of events moving toward a more radical course, the printers of Maryland's leading newspaper more than ever expressed these changing viewpoints. Their by now radical attitude was shown in the report of the burning of the *Peggy Stewart*.<sup>27</sup> In July 1775, the Baltimore-bound ship *Totness*, suspected of carrying contraband, ran aground near Annapolis. A "number of people met," in defiance of a ruling of the local committee of inspection, and, "highly resenting so daring an

<sup>22</sup> Dickinson's letters were printed in 12 installments in each issue, *Ibid.*, Dec. 17, 1767-Mar. 10, 1768.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, May 27, 1773.

<sup>24</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776* (New York, 1958), pp. 129-135.

<sup>25</sup> *Md. Gazette*, June 2, 1774.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 29, 1774.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 20, 1774.



infringement of the continental association, . . . went aboard, and set her on fire." There was not a hint of condemnation of these radical proceedings in the *Gazette*.<sup>28</sup>

As the clouds of conflict over the Coercive Acts grew darker, the Greens turned their journal into an organ of the Anne Arundel committee of correspondence. They published notices of approaching citizens' meetings, elections, and provincial conventions. Resolutions and proceedings of local, provincial, and continental assemblies filled their pages.

War found the Greens publishing Thomas Paine's "Crisis" series and various Maryland essayists using such names as "Solon," "An American," "Cato," and "Plainurus": all crying for continued resistance. "Cato" urged his fellow citizens to watch the enemy within, suggesting they "guard well, your suspicious neighbours, and secure your known internal foes—secure 'em! Hamper, pinion, and bind 'em, from rendering you the every mischief they most assuredly would do you, were they at will."<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the war the Greens printed notices of military action in a manner designed to encourage the rebels. Despite the dangers of invasion and capture by Sir William Howe's forces moving up the Chesapeake Bay in 1777, they defiantly published articles by Paine. Concurrently they editorialized against "enemy" privateers which "run along the shore, and into the unguarded rivers, and plunder the inhabitants. Negroes are their chief object, whom they intend to sell in the west Indies." Similar raids in support of traitor Benedict Arnold's Virginia campaign of 1781 were also condemned.<sup>30</sup> As Washington moved his army south to encircle Cornwallis, the British commander's action reports concerning the Battle of Guilford Courthouse were disparaged by the editors as "replete with *false colourings*, calculated to extole the *fortitude* and *heroism* of Britons, to diminish *their* losses, extenuate their cruelties and disgrace, and inspire the [British] administration with delusive hopes of conquest . . ."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, July 20, 1775.

<sup>29</sup> "Cato" in *Ibid.*, July 16, 1779; for examples of other writers see issues of Nov. 21, Nov. 28, 1776, Jan. 9, Feb. 13, 1777, Feb. 18, July 7, 1780; Paine's "American Crisis" series began Jan. 2, 1777.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 21, Sept. 18, Sept. 25, 1777, Mar. 22, 1781.

<sup>31</sup> *Supplement to Md. Gazette*, Aug. 23, 1781.

Any "delusive hopes of conquest" were shattered just a few weeks later. The *Gazette's* publishers saved their highest accolades for the victor of Yorktown when he visited Annapolis, November 22-23, 1781. According to the Greens,<sup>32</sup>

On his appearance in the streets, people of every age eagerly pressed forward to feed their eyes with gazing on the man, to whom, under Providence, and the generous aid of our great and good ally, they owed their present security, and their hopes of future liberty and peace; the courteous affability, with which he returned their salutes, lighted up ineffable joy in every countenance, and diffused the most animated gratitude through every breast.

You would have thought the very windows spoke,  
So many greedy looks of young and old  
Through casements darted their desiring eyes  
Upon his visage; and that all the walls,  
With painted imagery, had said at once,  
GOD SAVE THEE, WASHINGTON.

With this effort completed, the printers returned to their usual practice of reporting local events with a sentence or two under the Annapolis dateline. Seldom, if ever, would they allow their own emotions as much room as they did on the day of Washington's visit.

The relative economic, social, and political importance of Annapolis declined after the Revolution. Baltimore, with its fine harbor and easy access to the wheat fields of the west, became the major urban center of Maryland. But, in the period before her decline, the capital was filled with business, political, and social leaders. Reflecting the views and politics of such men was the *Maryland Gazette*, the colony's only paper until 1773; and in turn it influenced those who read its pages. Thus the Greens' weekly helped construct American democracy. Surely this was one of those institutions which Professor Morgan had urged historians to dissect since it mirrored and partially shaped contemporary minds.

<sup>32</sup> *Md. Gazette*, Nov. 29, 1781.